



Customer Focus

The 3R Ranch, owned by Reeves and Betsy Brown, is situated along the eastern slope of the Wet Mountains, southwest of Pueblo, Colorado. The 10,000 acre ranch is in the middle of a large block of other productive, working lands that depict Colorado's ranching heritage. Lying just east of the San Isabel National Forest, this area is a mosaic of ecosystems that provide important wildlife habitat and features the breathtaking scenic beauty of the state.

Mr. Brown says, "I believe preserving America's productive land is as high a priority as defending our country's freedoms against our enemies. Maintaining our unique quality of life in America is equally dependent upon both maintaining our ability to abundantly produce food and fiber wealth from our land base, and having the security to pursue our individual dreams and aspirations."

The Browns are part of the Wet Mountain Open Space Coalition that intends to protect a block of 20,000 acres through a combination of voluntary donations and "bargain sale" conservation easements.

"Placing a permanent conservation easement on 3R Ranch was important to me in order to keep the ranch intact, and to have the tax advantages for passing the ranch to the next generation," says Mrs. Brown.

The 1,080 acres of irrigated hayland protected by the FPP is prime farmland, the "productive heart of the ranch," and some of the most important agricultural land in western Pueblo County.

Farmland Protection Program Colorado Summary

Overview The USDA Farmland Protection Program (FPP) helps farmers keep their productive land in agriculture. The program assists States, Tribes, local governments and non-profit organizations by purchasing conservation easements for the purpose of limiting conversion to non-agricultural uses. NRCS provides up to 50% of the easement cost to the cooperating entity, which acquires, manages, and enforces the easement. Landowners participate voluntarily, and protected farms remain in private ownership. Every protected farm operates under a conservation plan approved by the local Conservation District. Nationally, over \$52 million have been obligated to state and local entities since establishment of the program in 1996. Proposals were accepted in 1996, 1997, 1998, and 2001.

Accomplishments To date, \$2,518,100 of FPP funds have been awarded to 8 cooperating entities. These funds have or will protect over 5,300 acres of agricultural lands on 12 different properties around the state. These include irrigated farmlands along the "Front Range," an orchard overlooking the Colorado River on the West Slope, and cattle ranches near Gunnison, Pueblo, and Steamboat Springs. In the three FPP cycles Colorado has participated in, a total of 28 requests have been received for \$9,466,915, covering 13,930 acres.

Outlook Colorado is among the fastest growing states in the nation, with approximately one million new residents tallied over the last decade; and two million more by 2025. Telecommuters enjoy mountain living, while working from home. Retirees find Colorado very appealing, especially the "West Slope." Extraordinary development pressure comes also from the demand for "second homes," especially in mountain valleys near ski resorts. Agricultural lands are being taken out of production as a result—at a rate of about 130,000 acres per year. Most of Colorado's agricultural lands are intimately connected with natural landscapes and ecosystems, and any loss of agricultural land can severely impact wildlife through fragmentation of habitat and disruption of migration corridors. Water supplies, water quality, and scenic resources are affected, too. Smart Growth is a priority for Coloradans, and there is a large and growing demand for funding that will help acquire conservation easements to help manage growth and ensure viable agriculture for generations to come.



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Farmland Protection Program Colorado Easements (As of December 2001)

County: Boulder / **Acres:** 38
Total Easement Cost:
 \$114,000
Average per acre: \$3,000
Federal payment amount:
 \$57,000
Percentage: 50%

County: Gunnison
Acres: 2,764
Total Easement Cost: \$2,544,871
Average per acre: \$921
Federal payment amount:
 \$1,070,000
Percentage: 42%

County: Mesa / **Acres:** 33
Total Easement Cost: \$268,500
Average per acre: \$8,136
Federal payment amount:
 \$134,250
Percentage: 50%

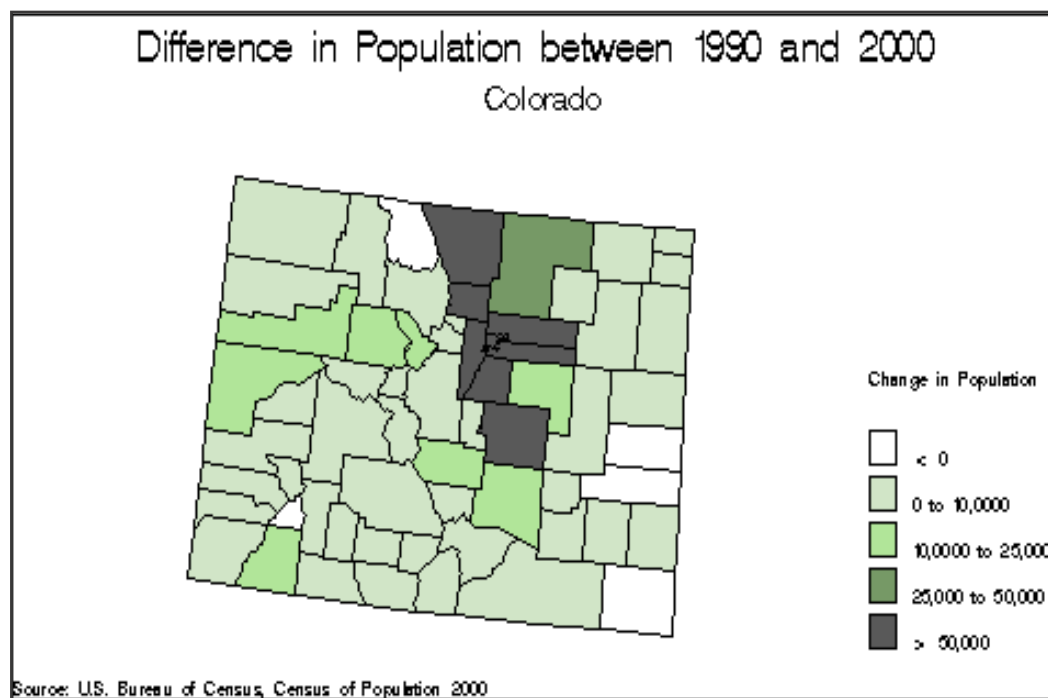
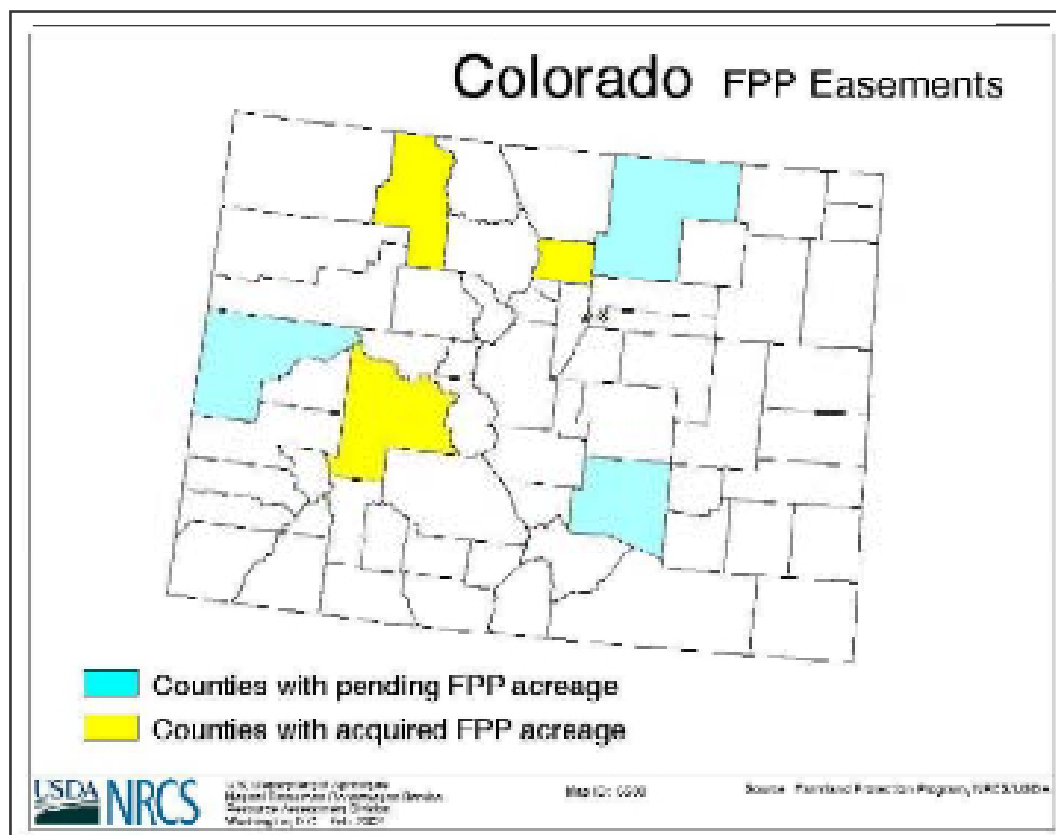
County: Pueblo / **Acres:** 1,070
Total Easement Cost: \$353,700
Average per acre: \$331
Federal payment amount:
 \$176,850
Percentage: 50%

County: Weld / **Acres:** 120
Total Easement Cost: \$367,500
Average per acre: \$3,063
Federal payment amount:
 \$150,000
Percentage: 41%

County: Routt / **Acres:** 1,328
Total Easement Cost: \$2,933,960
Average per acre: \$2,209
Federal payment amount:
 \$930,000
Percentage: 32%

COLORADO TOTALS:

Acres: 5,353
Easement Costs:
 \$6,582,531
Average per Acre: \$1,230
Federal Payment
Amount: \$2,518,100
Percentage: 38%



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